

NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Education Services Newsletter

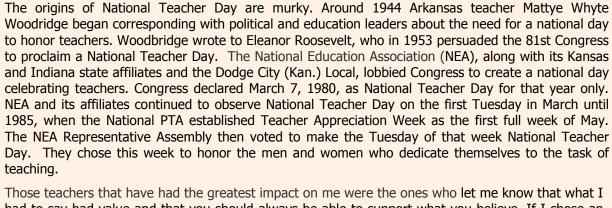
SPECIAL SPRING EDITION/2009

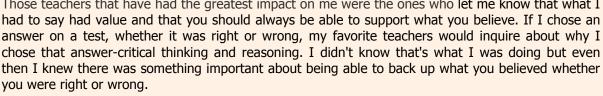




This special edition is a tribute to the Sate of Nevada educators who work in our prisons.
We thank you and deeply appreciate all your hard work.

Teacher Appreciation Week: Recognizing the Importance of Our Educators





This special education newsletter edition is dedicated to all staff who work so hard to inspire and educate our inmates. I hope you enjoy this compilation of essays and reflections written by your constituents.



In this issue:

Teacher Appreciation
Day: Not Nearly Enough

Teaching in Prison:
A Reflection

Teaching on the Inside

At Risk Students:
Victims of Miseducation
and Failure

A Dance to Remember

Correctional Education
Outcomes for the
State of Nevada
FY 2007-08

Teacher Appreciation Day: Not Nearly Enough

By Alan Haskvitz

Ah, yes, Teacher Appreciation Week. That is when the entire community allegedly comes together to celebrate those individuals who have preserved and continue to inculcate the values of society and the richness of learning into the youth of America. Just because it coincides with the mandated testing required by NCLB and the pressures of making sure every student is prepared for life - I mean the test - is probably just a glitch in the government's calendar allocation week department.

Despite all the testing requirements, changing student demographics, rising class sizes, the fact teacher pay has deteriorated in buying power by 15 percent in the last 20 years, and that college graduates who choose teaching will ultimately make half of what those who select most every other major make, teachers are still enthusiastic about what they do.

Indeed, public school teachers are more satisfied with their careers today than at any point in time over the last two decades. Of the three million teachers in the United States 35 percent are over 50-years-old and still hanging in there, that despite statistics revealing over 25 percent of new teachers intend to leave teaching in the next five years for other occupations.

Teacher Appreciation Day: Not Nearly Enough by Alan Haskvitz

cont.

"If a doctor, lawyer, or dentist had 40 people in his office at one time, all of whom had different needs, and some of whom didn't want to be there and were causing trouble, and the

So with an increasing need for new teachers, a happy bunch of new teachers and millions of underpaid and aging experienced teachers, you would think that Teacher Appreciation Day would be a hot topic. Well, using Google Fight reveals that the number of citations for Teacher Appreciation Week was trounced by those for Nurses Appreciation Week 6 to 1. Educators lost to police appreciation week 2 to 1, and mailman delivery appreciation week 10 to 1. Teacher appreciation week came close only to fireman appreciation week, but even then educators fell 70,000 citations short.

What are we missing here? Education is the Queen of Sciences. Everything is channeled through teachers. What is clearly needed is a salute to teachers that would last more than a day or week. It should last at least a month. After all, National Oatmeal Month, National Thank You Month, National Wild Bird Feeding Month, National Frozen Food Month, National Frog Month, Dairy Month, Anti-Boredom Month, National Blueberry Month, National Catfish Month, Peanut Butter Lover's Month, and even National Popcorn Popping Month get their 30 days of attention.

The staff from NDOC couldn't agree more.

doctor, lawyer, or dentist, without assistance, had to treat them all with professional excellence for nine months, then he might have some conception of the classroom teacher's job." --Donald Quinn

Teaching in prison: A reflection

By Dr. Charles Quinn

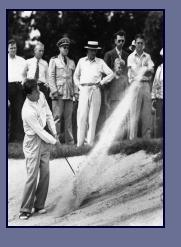
To understand my teaching style within the Correctional setting, I need to briefly outline why I was drawn to teaching as a profession. My education includes a B.A. in history, M.Ed. in secondary education, M.A. in history, and a Doctor of Arts in history and teaching methodologies. I have been teaching, mostly at the college level, since 1963. Early in my undergraduate years, I realized that I loved the whole process of learning. I was intellectually stimulated when introduced to new ideas or different perspectives of old notions. But most significantly of all, I also realized that I thoroughly enjoyed sharing these new ideas and perspectives with others. Teaching has been my venue for pursuing my lifelong love of learning and sharing. I am a teacher who is committed to being a student for life. Armed with these credentials and this philosophy, I began my career as a teacher. After 35 years of high school and college teaching, I became an educator in a correctional setting. Initially, I began as an administrator. I was hired as the principal of the Education Department.

Parenting program: After my first six months on the job, my immediate supervisor asked me to develop a parenting program for the inmates. Not only did she want me to develop the program, she also expected me to teach it. I welcomed the challenge and within six months, I began teaching inmates parenting skills. This adventure proved to be an extraordinary experience for the students and me. Since I had no formal training in this field, I decided that this program needed to be focused on how I could best help these men to 1) understand their roles as fathers and 2) maintain their familial relationships from a distance. Part and parcel of this process was to expose them to ideas of childrearing that were not part of most of their cultures. With these thoughts in mind, I began by giving them form letters they could send to their children (explaining their situation). Other form letters were provided to send to their child's teacher and to their child's caregiver.

When we began the program, I wanted the students to have a very clear understanding that there was no specific way to be the perfect parent. Accordingly, on the very first day of class, I wrote on the blackboard a recipe for marinara sauce. (I do make a mean marinara sauce!) Then, on the slate next to the recipe, I wrote, "Recipe for Good Fathering." I wrote nothing under the title. We spent the rest of the class discussing the fact that there is no sure-proof method for perfect parenting. My intent here was to begin our adventure with no singular path to perfect parenting, because there is none. Over the ten weeks we spent together, I got them to share with each other the methods and manners they used to address the varied issues they encountered as fathers. To facilitate this, I made myself vulnerable by sharing some of my personal experiences—particularly my mistakes (as I perceived them).



"Upon the subject of education, not presuming to dictate any plan or system respecting it, I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we as a people may be engaged in. That everyone may receive at least a moderate education appears to be an objective of vital importance." -- Abraham Lincoln



Teaching in prison: A reflection By Dr. Charles Quinn

cont

By the mid-term of the course, most of them felt comfortable about sharing their personal feelings about sensitive issues. One of my main points of focus throughout the discussions was the need to respect the children and their mother. I quoted Father Hesburg who said, "The greatest gift a father can give a child is to love the child's mother." I also challenged them on corporal punishment and the stereotyping of male/female roles. For example, I asked them a hypothetical question about a 14-year-old son who was very athletic. How would they respond to this son if one day he announced he had enrolled in a ballet class? Of course, most initial responses were negative. A lively discussion ensued with no resolution of the issue. However, my intent was not resolution, but rather to challenge their thought process regarding male/female stereotypes. When the course concluded, I videotaped each graduate reading a book to his child. We then sent this video and the book to the child. This proved to be a very satisfying conclusion to the program and created a direct bond to their loved ones at home.

Organizing a prison classroom: After four-and-a-half years of being the school principal, I accepted the opportunity to become a classroom teacher in the Department of Corrections. I was assigned to teach inmates who read below the fifth-grade level. Fortunately, my predecessor had a well- established structure and curriculum already in place.

The cornerstone of her program was built on two simple yet fundamental educational concepts: circular and rectangular tables for the students and three-hour class sessions. With these two fundamental components in place, conjoined with appropriate educational materials, I was able to teach approximately 15 adult males whose abilities ranged from first grade to mid-fourth grade. This heterogeneous group of men was made manageable by homogeneously grouping them at separate tables. I had inmate tutors who were assigned to a group of three to four students at each table. Those students who read at a very low level (below first grade to second grade) were assigned to one table. In like manner, the rest of the students were assigned a tutor and a table. The tutors maintained a folder for each student and recorded their daily progress in reading, writing, spelling, and math. At each table the students would read aloud to each other and then were required to answer questions about their reading. This addressed their ability to read and to comprehend. Once a week, each table of students had a spelling test, grade appropriate for that table.

All of this occurred in the context of an open-enrollment structure. When a student was able to read at or above the fifth grade, he "graduated" to the pre-GED class. Once a student moved on, he was replaced by a new student. These new enrollees became a new challenge. The continued success of the program was contingent upon my ability to gain the confidence of the new inmate/student.

Imagine being a 40- to 50-year-old man who is mandated by a correctional directive to attend school. He reads poorly (if at all) and his prior experience with formal education has been a very negative one. Somehow he has learned to survive, but in the process he developed poor learning skills. So, when he comes to my classroom, he does not feel the need to be there and, more significantly, he feels humiliated and embarrassed by having his academic shortcomings exposed. Therefore, I personally spend the first week with each new student helping him to feel comfortable and trying to convince him that learning to read and write is in his best interest. I ask the inmate to bring a letter from home. I then ask him to read it to me. If he cannot do so, I help him. Finally, with my guidance, he formulates a response.

It is clear that these men need to feel that someone cares and that there is a significant personal advantage to reading and writing. In many ways, their circumstance is akin to someone who plays golf but has never taken a professional lesson. This golfer develops bad habits, which prevent him from golfing well. In like manner, the inmate/student has had a lifetime of nonstandard grammatical habits. Therein lies the difference of teaching basic English to an adult versus teaching basic English to a six-year-old. The bad habits are deeply ingrained. To rectify this, it takes long hours of repetitive lessons and patience. I should note that we, the tutors and I, would evaluate each student weekly to determine if he was ready to move up to the next table. We also discussed what was or was not working with each student. There were times when I took a "difficult" student and worked one-on-one to help him in either math or reading. Since we had these students for approximately two hours and 45 minutes each day, we were able to provide concentrated efforts in both English and math on a daily basis.

'Game day': On Fridays, we would have "game day." I provided games such as Scrabble, Monopoly, Boggle, and cards. This afforded students a light, fun environment to apply the skills we were teaching. In this context, there is an anecdote I want to share which illustrates the value of "game day." Page 3

"Dr. Quinn, they can't cheat me anymore. I can read the Chance and Community Chest cards!"

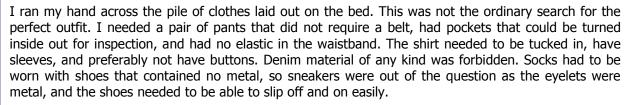
Teaching in prison: A reflection By Dr. Charles Quinn

cont.

I received a new student one day who literally could not read or write. He was about 50 years old. He had a fairly high level of native intelligence, but was never taught how to read and write. So my tutors and I set up a curriculum and he was a willing learner. Within eight to ten months, he could read at the third-grade level. During that timeframe, he always played Monopoly on "game day." One day, while he was playing the game, I heard him yell out, "Dr. Quinn, they can't cheat me anymore. I can read the Chance and Community Chest cards!" Rewards for teachers come in a wide variety of packages. For me, this was priceless! I now approach the twilight of my career, and I view my adventure educating prisoners as an intellectual and emotional rollercoaster. It has been fun, challenging, and, at times, exasperating. However, it has been a satisfying capstone to a career dedicated to learning and sharing.

Teaching on the Inside...

By Dominique T. Chlup

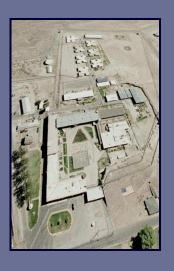


Unlike other important first days in my life, I would not bother to find the perfect jewelry or accessories to go with this outfit. No watches, no scarves, bobby pins, or pony tail holders could be worn. A traditional wedding band and medical alert bracelet were the only types of accessories allowed. This posed a problem: my grandmother's ring had adorned my right hand for years. She had worn it in lieu of a wedding band after her divorce nearly 50 years earlier. As a sign of affection I'd worn it every day since it had been passed on to me. I slipped it from my right hand over to my left and figured no one would even notice the little white lie. Unlike other classrooms I had taught in, to this one I was not taking a briefcase stuffed with paper, books, and pens. Instead, I was only taking what I could carry in my hands and exactly what I had already told my employers I would have: 12 copies of Jamaica Kincaid's poem "Girl," (unstapled and not paper-clipped), 12 pens that met all of the safety regulations (they could not be taken apart, have springs or clear plastic barrels showing the ink, and all had to be ball points), and one pad of paper from which I was to distribute individual sheets of paper to my 12 women learners as needed. I reviewed the Visitor's Guidelines one last time, placed my driver's license in my pocket, and prepared myself for the possibility that by the end of the night I might have the inside of my mouth swabbed and a stranger's hands padding down the length of my inseam. Or worse yet, some tiny glitch or infraction could deny me admittance. I was trying desperately to get inside a place that most of us strive to stay out of. But I had a job to do. I had my very first teaching job.

My first job in adult education was at Valhalla's Women's Jail in New York state. I did not have experience as an adult educator on the outside to compare this against until I later taught courses in more "traditional" adult education settings. And while the similarities are great, the differences are indeed striking. My inmate learners were not allowed to know my last name or any other personal information about me. I had to monitor the amount of paper that I distributed. (Students are permitted only a certain area of square footage in their cells to be occupied by paper. When they exceed this amount, they must either mail the excess to an individual on the outside for safekeeping or risk having it destroyed should it be found during an unannounced inspection.) I was never allowed to leave pens with my students, making it nearly impossible to assign written homework. All of the supplies I brought into the jail had to be accounted for before I left. The corrections officers once kept my students an extra 20 minutes as the class searched for a missing pen. It had simply rolled away from the table at which we had been working and another student inmate had picked it up, thinking it belonged to her group. I held class alongside five other teachers in the jail's gymnasium. A less than ideal working space: a chair was always being scraped across the floor, and when one group was writing it seemed as if another was always reading aloud. It was never quiet, but it was also never dull. Spanish and English flew through the air from woman to woman and the energy was something palpable. That first job was the one that called me into teaching. It is the continual thrill, joy, and reward of working with inmates that helps keep me there.







"To me the sole hope of human salvation lies in teaching."

-- <u>George Bernard Shaw</u>



All in the dark we grope along, And if we go amiss We learn at least which path is wrong, And there is gain in this.

We do not always win the race By only running right, We have to tread the mountain's base Before we reach its height.

But he who loves himself the last And knows the use of pain, Though strewn with errors all his past, He surely shall attain.

Some souls there are that needs must taste Of wrong, ere choosing right; We should not call those years a waste Which led us to the light.

by Etta Wheeler Wilcox

At Risk Students: Victims of Miseducation and Failure

By Bill Page

No child abuse is more insidious, pernicious, and pervasive than the pain and humiliation of school failure inflicted daily on the lives of unfortunate, at-risk students. Failure constitutes child abuse as debilitating and inexcusable as the well publicized abuses because failure is also the result of deliberately imposed suffering and shame. The abusive failure is exacted by educators and school policy makers--the very people who should care most about preventing abuse and salvaging their wounded lives.

Failing students live in dread and fear--fear of continuing failure, fear of judgment, marginalization, ridicule, and rejection. Besides the expected punishment, they dread the daily torment and their parents' disapprobation and disillusionment. Failing students fear being labeled *dumb*. And, worst of all, fear that they may actually *be* dumb.

Fifteen Million Kids Are Flunked Every Year

Most frequently, school failure of at-risk children is the result of a mismatch between their lack of previous knowledge, experiences, and preparedness in relation to a school's predetermined curriculum and instructional level mandated according to grade level. To teachers, who have been successful in school, chronic failure is a tragedy taken for granted; its causes misunderstood. Fifteen million "at-risk" students are flunked and then blamed for their failure. Bearing labels of "deprived," "impoverished," "troublemakers," and "disadvantaged," they are subjected to an assault on their psychic and emotional well being.

Professor Martin Haberman, Wisconsin University, acknowledged authority, and namesake of the Haberman Foundation in Houston states:

"Miseducation is, in effect, a sentence of death carried out daily over a lifetime.

It is the most powerful example I know of cruel and unusual punishment and it is exacted on children innocent of any crime."

Being Bad Is Better Than Being Dumb

Persistent failure becomes accepted and expected, requiring a rigorous defense of students' dignity and worth. At-risk students, compelled to attend specified age-grouped, grade-level classes that they cannot comprehend rely on swagger and defensive ploys to cover their pain, embarrassment, inability to learn the predetermined tasks, and exposure of their lack of readiness. They have learned that being bad is better than being dumb, that defiance wins peer approval, and that apathy or hostility precludes having to display their inadequacies. In my own schooling, I remember the class clowns, troublemakers, and defiant kids. I now know they were hiding their shame and failure with bravado and struggling for emotional and psychological survival.

As the failure stigma persists, it becomes internalized. After years of unrelenting failure, labeling, reinforcement, and their own inferential conviction, failing students actually believe the cruel message—they *are* dumb. And for the many whose failure results in retention, there is no longer any hope—they are over-aged, over-sized, and over-exposed. Retention is the ultimate school rejection because failure is undeniable. Failure becomes official. Everyone in the extended family and friends know s/he flunked. Last year's classmates and this year's classes are reminders of the failure. And, his/her being a year behind will continue throughout schooling.

This definitive diagnosis of "dumb" generally takes two directions. First, it can be accepted as truth and become a self-fulfilling reality, manifesting itself in a failure identity, defeatist behavior, demoralization, futility, apathy, or withdrawal. S/he is now "officially" dumb. Second, the disgraced victim can lash out at the obvious sources of his/her discomfiture and denigration. Resorting to retaliation or revenge ranging from passive aggression and vandalism, to hostility, defiance, bullying, anti-social behavior, they seek refuge within their own subculture at school. The leap to gang activity, alcohol, drug involvement, illicit behavior, and progressive levels of crime and violence, is as easy as "hanging out" and as predictable as statistical expectation.

School subcultures range from isolated "loners" or "fringers" to "failure identities," and the "misery loves company" circle of "losers," truants, pre-gang, and gang members. Failure cultures are so universal and well-known that when a failing student transfers to a different school, s/he will, within minutes, be expected to be friend the failing students in the new school. They are likely to bond immediately and form permanent pacts and friendships.

Page 5

cont.



At Risk Students: Victims of Miseducation and Failure By Bill Page

Being "Dumb" Leads Two Directions

Kids At-Risk Are Victims

Most failing students are guilty only of being born to parents too impoverished to nurture, too lacking in life skills to teach, too filled with futility to offer hope, and too preoccupied with daily survival themselves, to be resourceful to their children. These children are living the only life they know, and behave according to their lived experiences and accumulated knowledge and life skills. Whatever happened since birth is not the children's fault. They have lived in a dependent, adult managed world. If kids cannot adapt to the schools' predetermined curriculum based on age and grade level, it should be the schools' responsibility to adapt the curriculum to the kids. Schools adamantly refuse to accept or acknowledge that responsibility. At-risk students are victims of circumstances. They can't pull themselves up by the bootstraps —they have no boots.

For more Bill Page articles go to www.teacherteacher.com

A Dance to Remember

Excerpt from speech delivered to University of Millikin Freshmen by
Associate Professor of Chemistry, Ed Acheson

For the past 28 years, off and on, my wife and I have taken ballroom dancing lessons. It is with some embarrassment that I tell you that in those 28 years, off and on, we have never, never, progressed beyond the second course. We take the first course, we go on to the second course, and at the end of the second course, our instructors say, "Maybe you should go back to course one." And the cycle repeats. It is with some embarrassment that I also tell you that I am the reason we have not progressed beyond the second course. On the dance floor my wife is graceful, poised, and confident. She also tries to lead, which is another story for a different time. I, on the other hand, have two left feet and no sense of rhythm. Is it one two chachacha, or one chacha, two chacha? It doesn't really matter which it is because, regardless, my feet would not follow. In those 28 years, however, I have learned some lessons that I think will allow you to change the answer to the question, "Will I do well in my classes?" from "maybe" to "yes."

Lesson number one.

It's one two chachacha.

Lesson number two.

Practice makes perfect. Another way of saying that is "repetition is the key to learning." Dance class meets once a week for two hours. The instructor begins by reviewing some of the things we did the previous week. Then the instructor tells us some of the new steps we will be learning that night, the instructor demonstrates them, and then we practice them. Sometimes we will get a handout with diagrams showing the steps and notes describing what we are to do. After two hours I take the lessons and my notes home with me, put them down on the table and never look at them again. The next week I go to class, and when the instructor begins to review what we did the previous week, I say to myself, "Did we do that?"

If I had practiced just half an hour every day between classes I know I would be a much better dancer than I am today. I would probably be so good that I would be on the show "So You Think You Can Dance?" instead of speaking with you this evening. If I practice half an hour a day for the six days between classes, that would only be three hours of practice a week. That's not really a lot. But I don't, and as a result, I'm not a good dancer. I hope you are beginning to see the lesson here. You will typically spend three hours a week in the classroom for each of your classes. I know it's a cliché and you've probably heard it before, but you really should plan on spending two hours studying outside of class for every hour you spend in class. That means you should plan on spending roughly 6 hours a week studying for every class that you take. You could be like me and dance class and not practice at all, but then you'd still be here after 28 years. I encourage you to do your practice and finish in four years.

Anyone who says sunshine brings happiness has never danced in the rain. ~Author Unknown



University of Millikin, Associate Professor of Chemistry, Ed Acheson

cont.

Lesson number three.

Be a good reader. I hope you remember that I said our instructor starts each new lesson by reviewing some of the things we did the previous week. I always think the instructor goes too fast and doesn't spend enough time reviewing. I sometimes think the instructor is a bad teacher because he or she is going too fast, but I know the fault lies with me. Since I haven't practiced enough, I'm not prepared to learn new moves. The instructor, rightfully so, assumes I have practiced and I'm ready to move on, and so introduces new moves. I, on the other hand, want to take class time to practice what I should already know. At the end of each lesson I often have to remind myself of one of my favorite quotes. With apologies to all the Ohio State Buckeye fans in the audience, it comes from Lloyd Carr, head football coach at the University of Michigan. Coach Carr is talking to a reporter about one of his star players. Quote: "He and I aren't on the same page yet. But he's a very good reader, so he will just have to find the page I'm on and get there". Unquote The mere fact that each one of you is here this evening is evidence that you are all very good readers. Your professors will never go too fast in class. You have to find the page they are on and get there. It may even take more than six hours of practice a week (see lesson two) but you need to do whatever it takes to get on the same page as your professor.

"A good teacher is one who makes himself progressively unnecessary."
--Thomas Carruthers

Lesson number four.

You never know. Every once in awhile, just to break up the routine of the class, our instructor will have us do some line dancing. I hate line dancing. It's stupid and I'm never going to do it. And as a result, as you might guess, I can't line dance. Last June one of my nephews got married. The reception had the usual first dance by the couple, followed by the parents' dance. After those two dances were complete, the DJ then said, "Okay, let's get this party started. Everybody up! Let's do some line dancing." Of course, everyone but me got up. I felt a little foolish and secretly wished that maybe I should have spent a little bit more time learning my line dancing. You never know. If I had a nickel for every time a student said to me, "Dr. Ed, do we have to know this? This is stupid." Or, "Dr. Ed, is this going to be on the exam?" I probably would be, oh, I don't know, sitting on a beach in Cancun maybe? Instead of standing in front of you this evening.

Dr. Ed Acheson can be reached at eacheson@millikin.edu

Correctional Education Outcomes for the State of Nevada Fiscal Year 2007-2008

Submitted by Rick Rasmussen, Nevada Department of Education Adult/Alternative/Distance Education Consultant

The following table represents inmates' education accomplishments during the 2007-2008 fiscal year. These statistics are quite impressive and reflect your commitment and dedication towards teaching. Once again, thank you.

In our next issue:

- Tribute to Our Graduates
- Graduation Highlights
- Statewide Reported Outcomes
- Progress Review
- Site Education Plans

NEVADA CORRECTIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATION OUTCOMES FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008

PROGRAM TYPE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED	NUMBER OF CREDITS EARNED	NUMBER OF CREDITS WAIVED	NUMBER OF GEDS AWARDED	NUMBER OF DIPLOMAS AWARDED	NUMBER OF PROFICIENCY EXAMS	TOTAL NUMBER OF CREDITS AWARDED
ADULT DIPLOMA	4084	5328	4409	396	318	915	9737
GED ONLY	695	681	1499	141	11	40	2180
PROF ONLY	4	275		0	3	3	275
ESL	560	53		2	0	0	53
TOTAL	5343	6337	5908	539	332	958	12245